

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
Ron Pinciaro, Executive Director, CT Against Gun Violence

Testimony re: Governor's HB 7027 AAC THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREOF

Oppose Section 1 (T94), Office of Policy Management, Budget Reduction for Project Longevity

Dear Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Rep. Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I write to you in opposition to the proposed reduction within the Office of Policy Management budget for Project Longevity. The steep cut from \$880,000 to \$550,000 threatens the very sustainability of this important and successful program.

Project Longevity has been a remarkable success..

The objective of the program, since inaugurated in 2011 by Governor Malloy, was to reduce gun homicides in our three largest cities: Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. The results of the program have exceeded even the most optimistic expectations.

Back in 2011, those three cities typically represented about 75% of the total firearm homicides for the state. In the year 2011, there were 75 homicides in those three cities. In 2012, the first full year for Project Longevity, the total dropped to 56; in 2013, to 49, in 2014, to 34; in 2015, the only year of increase, to 52 (still well below the pre-longevity average); and in 2016, a substantial drop again to 31, the lowest total since CT Against Gun Violence began keeping records, in 2002.

**CT Firearm
Homicides**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bridgeport	20	11	19	17	18	11	8	15	8
Hartford	28	32	26	29	20	21	15	25	13
New Haven	21	12	25	29	18	17	11	12	10
Total 3 Cities	69	55	70	75	56	49	34	52	31

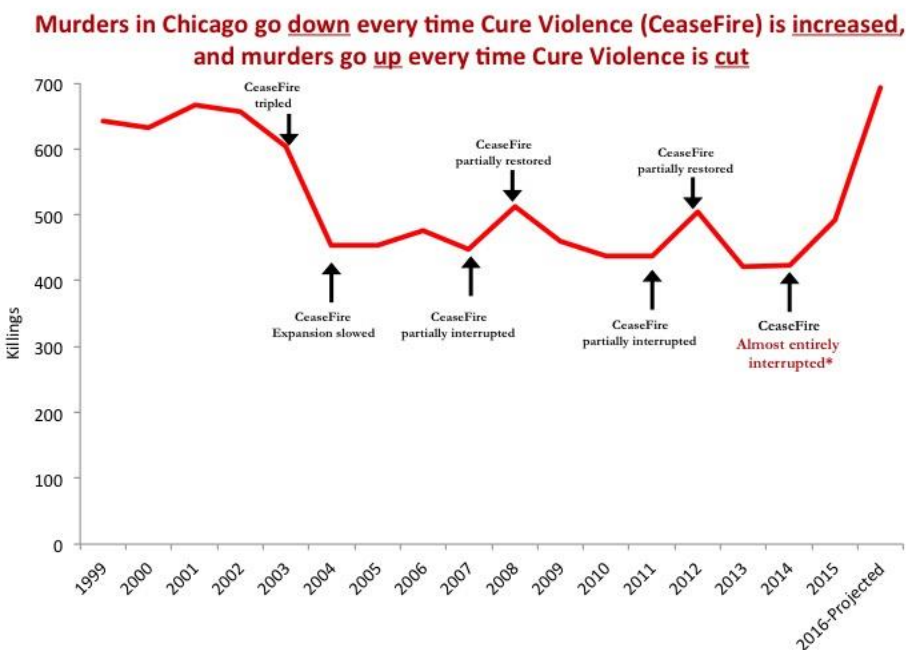
Ron Pinciaro

To any objective observer, even in this time when the need to find expense reductions is paramount, this does not look like a program that deserves to be cut, especially to the degree proposed. Lives are at stake here.

In Chicago recently, we have learned that cuts to programs like Project Longevity have had consequences that have shocked the nation. The Cure Violence program, a Project Longevity type program that's been effective there, sustained cuts in the program for 2016, despite warnings from the program's founder, Dr. Gary Slutkin. A \$4.5 million grant from the state that represented most of the funding for the program was suspended. Dr. Slutkin wrote in March 2015 that "Lives depend on this program.", The grant was not restored and the number of people killed by guns spiked to more than 750, the most since 1997, with more than 4,300 injured by shots fired.

The chart below indicates how the increase in murders over the years in Chicago correlates to funding cuts.

The question for the department, and the state is, "Do we want to risk lives by cutting this program in this way at this time?"



The potential risk of loss of life, and the fact that this program has been so successful, are reason enough to maintain the budget for Project Longevity at no less than current levels.

But even the economics do not support it. Researchers conservatively estimate that gun violence costs the American economy at least \$229 billion every year, including

\$8.6 billion in direct expenses such as for emergency and medical care.ⁱ The data from 2012 on the direct costs that account for \$8.6 billion per year, including long-term prison costs, the largest direct expense, result in an average of \$86,000 per gun death or injury of which 87% are paid by the taxpayer.

We all are aware of the need for budget cuts in our state. We are also aware of the need to protect the public safety. A cut of \$330,00 to the Project Longevity budget accomplishes neither. We ask that the proposed reduction be restored.

ⁱ Mark Follman, Julia Lurie, Jaeah Lee & James West, The True Cost of Gun Violence in America (2015), available at <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america>. ↗□